

AN ARTEFACT, PROBABLY OF PLEISTOCENE AGE,
FROM KEILOR, VICTORIA

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Plate V.

Some 35 years ago Mr. G. Moreton Riley, the well known amateur telescope maker, noticed part of a large pebble protruding from a low cliff of silty clay on the right bank of the Maribyrnong River about 30 yards downstream from the mouth of its tributary Salt Creek (Green Gully), a mile south of Keilor as the crow flies; Keilor is 10 miles north-west of Melbourne. The pebble was about 5 ft. above the base of the cliff and 4 ft. below its top; and, since it was the only one visible in the fine-grained material, Mr. Riley forced it out and then saw that one end was flaked to form the cutting edge of a primitive axe or chopper.

In February of this year he brought the specimen to the Museum, and his description of the position where he found it suggested that it had been enclosed in a Pleistocene terrace deposit. In view of this, he kindly arranged to accompany Mr. R. A. Keble and Miss Hope Macpherson (who had mapped the terraces in this locality) and myself to the place. In the years that have elapsed since the implement was found, the river has cut back its right bank for some yards and has destroyed the original site, but Mr. Riley pointed out the corresponding position close by in the existing bank of similar fine-grained material.

The river hereabouts has cut its channel through Pleistocene flood-plain deposits (compacted silt with occasional layers of small rounded quartz pebbles) into the underlying Silurian strata, and the flood-plain deposits now form terraces on both its banks. Short descriptions of the three main terraces in the Maribyrnong River valley, namely, the Keilor, the Braybrook and the Maribyrnong Park Terraces, and evidence of their Pleistocene age have been published elsewhere (Mahony, 1943 b). The river bank from which the specimen came is part of the youngest of these, the Maribyrnong Park Terrace, the surface of which is here about 19 ft. above the river bed; Mr. Keble and Miss Macpherson have measured the levels in this locality and found

that the river bed is 25 ft. 6 in. and the surface of the terrace 44 ft. above low water mark at Williamstown. The Maribyrnong Park Terrace is somewhat younger than the Keilor Terrace in which fossil human skeletal remains were found (Mahony, 1943 a; Wunderly, 1943; and Adam, 1943).

The implement (Plate V) consists of a waterworn pebble of spotted hornfels with a curved, smooth cutting edge at its thinner end made by knocking off flakes from one side, the other side of the cutting edge being formed by the waterworn surface of the pebble. Weathering has equally affected both the whole waterworn surface and surfaces from which flakes have been removed, and it has partly obscured the sharp outlines of the latter; this suggests antiquity. As shown in the illustration, the pebble is flattened on one side and rounded on the other; about half way along the rounded side is a roughened, pitted area, measuring an inch by three-quarters of an inch, which may have been caused by percussion, such as hammering with a hard stone. Apart from flaking, the pebble retains its original shape.

Hornfels *in situ* does not outcrop near Salt Creek, but it does five miles northward in the Maribyrnong River (Deep Creek) valley at the contact of Palaeozoic strata with intrusive granodiorite (James, 1920).

A cast of the specimen is in the National Museum of Victoria.

REFERENCES

- Adam, Wm., 1943. The Keilor Fossil Skull: Palate and Upper Dental Arch. Mem. Nat. Mus., Melbourne, 13, pp. 71-77, 4 figs., 2 pl.
- James, A. V. G., 1920. The Physiography and Geology of the Bulla-Sydenham Area. Pr. R. Soc. Vict., 32 (n.s.), pt. 2, pp. 321-49, 2 figs., 3 pl.
- Mahony, D. J., 1943 a. The Problem of Antiquity of Man in Australia. Mem. Nat. Mus., Melbourne, 13, pp. 7-56, 7 figs., 3 pl.
- 1943 b. The Keilor Fossil Skull: Geological Evidence of Antiquity, *Ibid.*, pp. 79-81.
- Wunderly, J., 1943. The Keilor Fossil Skull: Anatomical Description. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-69, 1 fig., 6 pl.

ADDENDUM

After the above notes were in print, Mr. K. F. Rose of the Meteorological Bureau presented to the Museum a stone artefact with a cutting edge which he had found in Hughes's sandpit, Keilor, where the fossil human skull was discovered. The implement when found was lying on the floor of the pit, evidently not in situ, but it may have been discarded during excavation of the Pleistocene terrace deposit. It is approximately three and a quarter inches long, two and a half inches at its widest end, and an inch thick. Like the implement described above, it is a hornfels pebble flaked only on one side, the other side being the natural surface of the pebble; and in technique, material and weathering the implements are similar.



Artefact from Junction of Green Gully and Maribyrnong River